

February 10, 2015

To: Montana Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Matthew Brower, Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference

Re: Testimony in opposition to SB 202

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Matt Brower [B R O W E R] and I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference. The Montana Catholic Conference serves as the public policy arm of the Roman Catholic Church in Montana and I speak on behalf of the two Roman Catholic bishops in Montana from the Diocese of Helena and the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings.

I am here today to voice our opposition to Senate Bill 202.

The Montana Catholic Conference remains steadfast in our opposition to physician-assisted suicide and any attempts to legalize it, and therefore, strongly opposes SB 202. Assisted suicide represents misguided public policy, which would have numerous detrimental implications for all of society.

This bill could encourage people with years to live to throw away their lives. For example, within the bill the term "terminal illness" does not articulate any distinction between persons who will die within six months *with* treatment and those who will die within six months *without* treatment. Even if there were a workable definition of terminal illness, diagnoses of terminal illnesses and predictions of life expectancy are notoriously inaccurate.

Senate Bill 202 provides a recipe for elder abuse and could actually lead to some people steering others toward suicide. What's to stop an interested party such as a potential heir from pressuring or coercing a victim at the time of administration of the lethal dose?

Additionally, this bill sends the wrong message to young people of our state where we already have one of the highest suicide rates in the country.

For many of the reasons that you have heard or will hear today we stand in strong opposition to Senate Bill 202. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on behalf of the Montana Catholic Conference, I urge you to vote "no" and thank you for your time.